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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ABUJA 000793

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM KCOR NI
SUBJECT: ELECTION RIGGING NIGERIAN STYLE

REF: A. ABUJA 767
     ¶B. ABUJA 666 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for reasons 1.4 (b & d).

¶1.  (C) Summary:  Governor Yar'Adua of the ruling People's
Democratic Party (PDP) was pronounced by INEC to be the
winner of Nigeria's April 21 presidential election.  However,
fraud and mismanagement plagued the poll at every stage, and
it is therefore impossible to assert any meaningful
relationship between the announced results and the will of
the people.  Mission Nigeria has identified three levels of
the process where mismanagement and fraud made it difficult,
if not impossible, for the election to produce a legitimate
result.  Examples of problems at all three levels, which we
are calling "retail, wholesale, and factory direct," are
detailed below.   End summary.


"Retail" Level Fraud
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¶2.  (C) Retail election rigging happens at the individual
polling station.  Nigeria has over 120,000 polling stations
and while observers were not present at all of them,
international observers did cover a significant sample.
Because observers had better access to polling sites than to
the various collation and counting levels, many of the retail
problems were witnessed directly.  The ruling party had an
advantage at retail rigging due to its control over INEC, the
security services, and many state and local governments, but
"competitive rigging" by opposition supporters also occurred.
 Fraud at the polling station level is not necessarily
directed from above; it may be the work of an overzealous
local party strongman.  Retail rigging includes underage
voting; intimidation of voters by thugs or security personnel
(either to keep legitimate voters away or to encourage those
in line to vote for the "correct" party); ballot box
stuffing; vote buying; theft of ballot boxes; and "padding"
the vote count at an individual station.  It may be committed
by party hacks manning the poll in place of INEC staff, or
legitimate INEC staff may be partisan or subject to bribery
or intimidation and go along with the fraud.

¶3.  (C) Mission observers witnessed brazen examples of retail
rigging around Nigeria.  Some examples include:

--In Nsukka (Enugu) observers saw a polling station that was
clearly being run by a known local PDP strongwoman.  The
station had been open less than 20 minutes, yet the ballot
box was half full.  The poll workers did not use the voters'
register or check registration cards; they did not stamp
ballots or ink voters' fingers.  There was no privacy for
voters, and all votes observed were for PDP.  The PDP
strongwoman told a Nigerian embassy employee in Igbo that the
observers should leave, and as they left, people who had
voted previously rejoined the queue.

--In Abakaliki (Ebonyi), Econoff saw an open ballot box
containing a large clump of presidential ballots, obviously
stuffed.

--Mission observers saw the Enugu Secretary to the State
Government steal a ballot box in Opi.  At another station
observers visited in Enugu town, the poll opened at 14:55 but
the ballot box was removed by soldiers at 15:50 after only 42
of about 200 people in the queue (of 1,800 registered voters)
had cast ballots.  British observers saw books of ballots
that had been pre-thumbprinted for PDP in Ayiere (Enugu).

-- In Benue, Mission and other international observers
witnessed cases of ballot snatching, ballot box stuffing,
intimidation, and delivery of voting material by PDP party
agents (including the Governor's brother).

--Endemic underage voting was observed in Katsina, Sokoto,
and Zamfara States.  At one station in Katsina metropolis,
Mission personnel observed a group of irate children hound
PDP party agents when they refused to pay them for casting
PDP votes.

--In Maeltideba (outside Gombe city), residents told Mission

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observers an INEC person came earlier in the day with one box
of ballots, allowed two people to vote, then announced voting
had finished and left with the materials.

-- In Bauchi city, a polling official continued to
authenticate the remaining ballots (stamping and signing the
back to make them valid for voting) as he spoke to observers,
even though he said he expected no more voters to arrive.
The observers suspect the authenticated ballots ended up in
the box once they left.

--In Ijebu-Igbo (Ogun), Mission observers visited a polling
station that opened at 14:00 and began its final vote count
at 14:30 -- in which time 600 voters ostensibly had cast
their ballots.  However, no voters could be found nearby.
The PDP won 279 of 362 votes for the presidency and 566 of
600 votes for the House of Representatives.  (Note:  The
station had received exactly 362 presidential ballots and 600
House ballots.)  Curiously, the same "thumbprint," which was
a half-inch dot, identically marked each ballot.


"Wholesale" Level Fraud
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¶4.  (C) Election fraud at the wholesale level involves the
inflation (or creation from whole cloth) of election results
from lower levels.  It may take place at a collation center
for the ward, local government area (LGA), or at state or
national INEC headquarters.  Wholesale rigging was made
easier in Nigeria by INEC's deliberate obfuscation of the
collation and tabulation process, which made it nearly
impossible to trace and verify results from a polling station
up the line.  Wholesale rigging is very difficult to prove
because there are at least six layers of counting and
tabulation, because INEC avoids announcing disaggregated poll
results, and because results are not posted at polling
stations, wards or other counting and collation points.  It
is hard to tell how the results may have been changed or

inflated when results are not broken down to the state, LGA,
or ward level.  Wholesale fraud is mostly committed by the
ruling party, because they are in control of most of the
state and local governments and therefore have the most
access to the machinery of power (INEC, security services) to
achieve desired results.  However, in opposition-dominated
states, wholesale rigging by the opposition is possible and
probably occurred.

¶5.  (C) Examples of wholesale fraud witnessed by observers
include:

--Withholding of vote tally sheets from polling stations
around the nation.  This allowed officials up the line either
to disqualify the results reported from a station because
they were submitted "improperly" or, more often, for the
tally sheets to be fraudulently filled in at a less visible
point up the chain of tabulation and submitted as genuine.

--In Katsina, Mission personnel personally witnessed PDP
party agents and INEC officials changing a stack of tally
sheets just 500 meters from a tabulation center.

-- In the Enugu East LGA, at least half of all polling
station results were being counted at the LGA rather than at
the polling place as required by law. Domestic observers and
party agents did not witness this counting. Results which had
been counted at the polling places had been brought directly
to the LGA rather than being collated at the ward level. None
of the polling places had official tally sheets and tallies
were recorded on plain note paper and were unsigned by
polling station staff or party agents. The materials were
piled in heaps and signed out without even the informal tally
sheets being separated and collected. Power was cut as
darkness fell, making it impossible to read ballots or tally
sheets anyway. The Election Officer on site refused to
describe what process he would use to collect and tally
results, which it appeared simply would not happen at all.

--On April 15, INEC headquarters in Abuja announced
gubernatorial results for Delta state before election
officials in Delta had finished counting the results.  On
April 16, INEC headquarters announced the gubernatorial

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results for Ondo state even though the Ondo Resident
Electoral Commissioner was reportedly trying to delay the
announcement because there were still no results from four of
the LGAs.

--In Edo state after the first round, the INEC-announced
results were almost an exact reverse of the results Mission
staff observed in the field.

--At the national level, we surmise that wholesale rigging
occurred simply through logic.  Observers witnessed low
turnouts (less than twenty percent nationwide) compounded by
large areas of the country where voting did not take place,
yet INEC's announced results show turnout of over sixty
percent.   This means that at least half, if not
three-quarters, of the votes "counted" by INEC in the
Presidential race were not based on ballots cast (Ref A).

--On April 23, INEC headquarters in Abuja announced the
results of the Presidential election when only 13 of the 36
states had finished collating results.

--An INEC Commissioner commented privately to an American aid
worker on April 25 that "even INEC was shocked at the
incredibly high vote total for Yar'Adua."


"Factory Direct" Rigging
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¶6.  (C) Mission has reported extensively on INEC's poor
record of elections preparations (Ref B).  Inadequate

technical and logistical preparation and the lack of voter
education created a climate of confusion that was exploited
for fraudulent purposes.  Some of this technical and
logistical mismanagement was inadvertent, but some of it
seems deliberate, designed to enable fraud at the wholesale
and retail levels.

¶7.  (C) Numerous examples of "factory direct" rigging
committed by INEC and the GON can be found in post's
reporting over the past year.  Additional examples include:

--Shuffle nationwide of police commanders and Regional
Electoral Commissioners (the highest ranking election
official in each state) several days before the election.

--Failure to issue appropriate identification to poll
workers, party agents, and observers, which created confusion
so that voters did not know who was a legitimate election
official and who was not.

--Failure to hire and train poll workers on time, which lead
to inconsistent and exploitable procedures at polling
stations around the country.

--Large-scale disenfranchisement of citizens through poorly
trained poll workers using a badly flawed, disorganized
voters' register.  Disenfranchisement of voters in states
where the majority of polling stations never opened or opened
extremely late (including but not limited to Rivers, Delta,
Bayelsa, Anambra, Abia, Gombe, Bauchi, and Borno).  In
several of these states, elections were not held at all in
either round, with a tiny number, if any, polling stations
opened, and results, usually with incredibly high turnouts,
simply manufactured out of thin air.

-- Printing of presidential ballots without serial numbers or
a tracking system that would allow for the detection of
counterfeit or non-sequential ballots.

--Consistent denial of problems with elections preparation by
senior INEC and GON officials when the international
community offered to help with things like registration,
printing ballots or technical advice.  Ignoring technical
advice provided by the UNDP, IFES, others.

--Use of state machinery, especially the Economic and
Financial Crimes Commission, to keep opposition candidates
off the ballot.  Declaring surprise "holidays" on April 12
and 13 to deliberately delay a Supreme Court decision on
whether Atiku and other opposition candidates may contest the

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election.


Result of Rigging: Garbage In, Garbage Out
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¶8.  (C) COMMENT:  Perhaps, as President Obasanjo and the PDP
contend, the deeply flawed election process doesn't matter
because "Yar'Adua would have won anyway."  Unfortunately, we
will never know.  An election is merely a process to
translate the will of the people into the selection of
government officials.  Like any process, if the data going
into the process is invalid, the result is meaningless.  As
computer programmers like to say, "garbage in, garbage out."
In this case, the data (input) are the ballots cast by
legitimate voters and the result (output) is the naming of
Nigeria's president-elect.  However, most Nigerian voters did
not or could not cast ballots, retail level fraud meant that
many voters were intimidated or had their vote "watered down"
by ballot box stuffing, wholesale rigging insured that
results from the polling station to the state level were
"padded" with extra votes (usually but not always for the
ruling party), and all this occurred in an atmosphere of
chaos and confusion about even simple things like who was on
the ballot and where and when to vote.  It is therefore

impossible to know how well Yar'Adua would have done in a
legitimate election, because the results have been so
manipulated from top to bottom that they no longer bear any
relationship to reality. END COMMENT.
CAMPBELL